



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ABRAHAM MAPU.

THE following account of Abraham Mapu's¹ life and works is substantially the same as that given in a paper read before the Ramsgate Jewish Literary Society in August last. Something of what I then said as to the limitations of the paper, and the reasons for my choice of subject, may perhaps be repeated here.

The limitations will be apparent enough to the reader. They arise partly from the writer's lack of that intimate acquaintance with the Biblical and Talmudic writings which would be necessary for the thorough comprehension of Mapu's Hebrew ; partly from the want of such assistance as the student of almost any living language except Hebrew would find in manuals and textbooks of literature. Apart from Mr. Brainin's Hebrew *Life of Mapu*, I do not know of any attempt at a critical estimate of his work ; nor does it seem possible to obtain any coherent account of the development of that neo-Hebraic revival in which Mapu was a pioneer. As a consequence, this paper is limited practically to a consideration of the author's works in themselves, without reference to their forerunners or their successors, to the influences that helped to make them what they were, or to their influence on the works of other writers. There is no attempt here to indicate Mapu's rightful place in the history of Hebrew literature, because such an attempt would necessitate a wider range of vision than I can claim.

But it is really because of its limitations that the paper has been written. If the textbooks and manuals to which I have referred had been available, there would have been

¹ This seems to be the accepted spelling, though a double *p* would be more accurate.

the less justification for a paper such as this. It is because the study of modern Hebrew literature has been so neglected in this country that a tiro may venture, with however much diffidence, to put forward a claim to be heard on the subject. Perhaps—who knows?—his tentative and unsteady footsteps may be followed by others whose tread is firmer.

Abraham ben Yekuthiel Mapu was a native of Slobodka, a suburb of the Russian town of Kovno. He was born in the year 1808, the son of poor parents, in a community where poverty was the rule. His father was a teacher—which means that his livelihood was always precarious, and scanty at the best of times. To the normal disabilities (from the material point of view) that beset the Russian Hebrew teacher, Yekuthiel Mapu added an idealist temperament and a keen thirst for knowledge, which made him spend his time in study and his money on books, instead of devoting both to the merely material needs of himself and his family. Abraham Mapu naturally had a thorough education, according to the ideas of his time: he mastered the Torah under his father's tuition, and at a very tender age was sent to the *Beth Hamidrash* to wrestle with the intricacies of the Talmud. His natural aptitude and love of study soon made him an adept in this branch also, and it was not long before he acquired considerable local fame as an *גלוי*—a genius or prodigy. It followed that he was eagerly sought after, as an eligible *parti*, by mothers of daughters: for in those days the pious mother in Israel looked for learning, not wealth, in her son-in-law. But Mapu himself was little concerned with these mundane matters. Capable though he was of strong affections, his heart was really in his books, and the external world in which he lived was strange to him. His imaginative and enthusiastic temperament led him to study the mystic writings of the Kabbala, with which his father had some slight acquaintance; and they took so strong a hold on his imagination

that at the age of sixteen he must needs endeavour to practise the occult science that they teach. He was seized with the idea of making himself "a seer unseen," of being able to go about among his fellow men and watch their doings, himself invisible. Mr. Brainin relates at length the story of this experiment in practical Kabbala: how Mapu found a skull on the barren hill, at the foot of which Kovno lies, and, in accordance with the Kabbalistic prescription, filled its crannies with earth and made flowers grow from it; how, after scrupulously carrying out all the necessary rites and ceremonies, he walked into the city believing himself really invisible, until a friend accosted him; and how, in spite of his bitter disillusionment, he did not abandon his faith in the mystic symbols, but concluded that he must have neglected some essential step, or else had not reached the height of saintliness necessary for one who is to become invisible.

The story is interesting because it is so typical of the man. It shows him possessed at that early age of the same wonderful power of imagination which enabled him throughout his life to triumph over the abject sordidness of his surroundings, and made his inner life so rich while outwardly his circumstances were scarcely tolerable. Little better than a beggar from the material point of view, he carried within him a wealth of visions and fancies which had for him far more of reality than his external surroundings. In after years he could look back with half-contemptuous amusement on the extravagances into which he had been led by his youthful enthusiasm; but his heart remained always the heart of an enthusiastic youth. To the last he felt an almost childish affection for the creatures of his imagination, and watched over their joys and their sorrows with a keener interest than that which he took in the fate of actual human beings.

This being so, we shall not expect to find in the events of his outward life anything that demands or deserves a lengthy exposition. His livelihood, such as it was, he

gained chiefly by teaching, either in private families or in schools. Sometimes he was fortunate enough to obtain appointments in government schools, which probably gave him a respectable living; but for the most part his income was not sufficient to meet his needs, and he had to accept assistance from his brother Mattathias, who was a fairly prosperous man of business. It goes without saying that the production of his books did not increase his worldly wealth. He lost his first wife at an early age, and married again. His daughter, to whom he was passionately attached, was taken from him in her childhood, and his only son grew up to be almost estranged from him. Physically he was not robust; for a long time his right hand was paralysed, and he had to train himself to write with the left. He died, at the age of fifty-nine, in Königsberg, while on his way to seek a cure at a German watering-place—his first excursion beyond the bounds of his native country. It is a sufficiently melancholy record, such as might almost be expected of a poet doomed to the Ghetto life of poverty and restriction, and little is to be gained by dwelling on it. For us the essence of the man lies in his spiritual life and its fruits, and to these we may turn with a feeling of relief, as from darkness to light.

As a teacher, Mapu developed a considerable interest in his profession, and wrote treatises on pedagogy, designed to overthrow the monstrous system, or absence of system, under which he had himself been brought up—a system which overlooked the difference between the child and the adult, and burdened the infant mind with a load of abstruse and technical knowledge with which none but a fully-developed intelligence could be reasonably expected to cope. Nor was his interest in education confined to the Bible and the Talmud, the subjects ordinarily taught amongst the Jews of his time and country. His own love of knowledge led him to study other languages besides Hebrew. Under the most adverse circumstances, and with

the least possible assistance, he made himself familiar with Latin, Russian, French, and German, and he desired to see the knowledge of these languages spread among the Jews in Russia. To say this is to say that he belonged to the school whose watchword was *Hascalah* or enlightenment—a school bitterly opposed to the blind devotees of Chassidism, and tending to become not less violently antagonistic to the dominant Rabbinic orthodoxy.

It is difficult to appreciate correctly the points at issue in the three-cornered contest between Rabbinism, Chassidism, and the *Hascalah*, and still more difficult to do justice to all parties. Chassidism and the *Hascalah* had this much in common, that each was a revolt against Rabbinism; but the two revolts took opposite directions. Chassidism set up, against the dry formality of the traditional orthodoxy, an ideal of ecstatic communion with God, as compared with which mere observance of law was valueless. The men of the *Hascalah*, on the other hand, protested, and not without reason, against the narrowness of the Rabbis, who viewed with apprehension any attempt to introduce into Jewish life the culture of European nations. Chassidic fanaticism, more especially when it turned to wonder-working and charlatanry, was naturally detested by both the upholders of law and the apostles of culture; and from this point of view the Rabbi and the "Mascil" (disciple of the *Hascalah*) are at one. But for our present purpose the opposition between these two schools is of more importance than their point of unity, because, although the bitterest hatred of the Mascilim was directed against the Chassidim, circumstances rendered it inevitable that the breach between them and the orthodox school should widen.

The main issue, as I have indicated, was that between the claims of an exclusively Jewish education and those of general culture. It is an issue with which English students of Jewish history are familiar, as it appears in the history of Moses Mendelssohn, the father of the *Hascalah*

movement, and his followers. But conditions in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century were not those that obtained in Germany in the latter part of the eighteenth, and hence the Hascalah movement developed along very different lines in the two countries. In Germany the efforts of the Jews to assimilate Western culture had their logical result in the successful striving after social and political emancipation. But in Russia there was no Lessing; the Jew might become as enlightened as he liked, but he could not win recognition of his rights as a citizen. The result was that whereas in Germany assimilation, rendered easy by the political victory, was carried to extreme lengths, and "enlightenment" came to mean the discarding of the Hebrew language and everything else distinctively Jewish, in Russia the Mascilim remained true to Jewish tradition, and were even compelled to adopt Hebrew as their medium of expression, because no other language (except the despised Yiddish) could be understood by those for whom they wrote. Thus, while the "enlightened" German Jews tended towards absolute race-suicide, the Russian Mascilim helped to strengthen the racial, or rather national, Jewish feeling by their use of Hebrew as the language of ordinary life: and this in spite of the fact that their ideal was distinctly anti-national. This inconsistency between their aims and their means helps to explain the opposition with which they met from the side of the orthodox. At first sight it would appear that these latter should have been the first to welcome the spread of a knowledge of Hebrew. But their distrust of foreign ideas was stronger than their love of their ancestral language; and if Hebrew was to be used, as the Mascilim used it, to spread external culture in the Ghetto, then even Hebrew must be opposed. Thus the party of traditional orthodoxy was driven to discourage even the study of Hebrew, and to adopt an almost Catholic policy of obscurantism. It is easy to condemn them; but it must be remembered that to them foreign culture meant dis-

integration, and disintegration death, and they chose what seemed to them the lesser evil. With the example of German Jewry before them, they did not entirely lack justification.

For Mapu, however, with his thirst for knowledge, and his creative genius striving for expression, there could be nothing but evil in the attitude of those for whom reading was a crime, and writing a sin; and he became perforce a Mascil and an opponent of the orthodox school. Like most of the Russian Mascilim, he suffered to a certain extent for his heresy; for the old-fashioned party was in the ascendant, and in the restricted Ghetto-life could do a great deal of mischief by petty acts of persecution. In Mapu's case, the malignity of his enemies brought about the suppression and partial destruction of one of his longest books—the חֲלוֹמֵי חַיִּים or "Dreamers"—while it was yet in manuscript, with the result that only a fragment of it now survives. But Mapu was not the sort of man to gird on sword and buckler, and fight for the faith that was in him. By temperament he was timid, and a man of peace. And so the Hascalah had in him a loyal disciple indeed, but not an active champion. Nor can he be said to have cherished any high ideal of spiritual emancipation and uplifting. He wished to see European culture, together with European dress and manners, diffused among the children of the Ghetto; but he had no clear conception of the use to which these valuable possessions were to be put when they should have been acquired. There is not much to be said for external assimilation as an end in itself. Mapu's claim to respect lies not in the value of his ultimate ideals, but in the brilliance of his immediate achievement. The revival of the Hebrew language as a general literary medium was a task worth attempting on far other grounds than those of the mere assimilationist; and into this task Mapu threw himself with a splendid enthusiasm, which produced results no less splendid.

It is therefore as the leader of a Hebrew revival that

Mapu is to be primarily regarded; and this fact must be borne in mind in any attempt to estimate the value of his work. For himself, the importance of his novels lay in the fact that they were written in Hebrew, not in their interest as stories or psychological studies. We shall not, however, be doing him an injustice if we insist on treating his novels as such, and not merely as essays in the Hebrew language, if only because of the vivid interest, already mentioned, which he felt in his imaginary men and women. We shall not, indeed, be able to allow him, as a novelist, much claim to originality of conception or profound insight into human nature. His technique is wholly borrowed, and his psychology rudimentary. Yet a writer with such powers as a story-teller, and such ingenuity in manipulating a complicated plot, cannot be denied a title to rank among the novelists. And this claim to originality he has, that he was the first writer who chose the ancient Jewish state as the scene for a romantic novel, and told his story in the language of the Bible. To wed the old Hebrew tongue, with all its solemn and religious associations, to a romance of the melodramatic type—this was the feat that Mapu conceived and accomplished.

It was apparently his French reading that made him a writer of novels. Of all authors whom he read he admired none so much as Eugène Sue, whose *Mystères de Paris* achieved a European reputation, and was translated into Hebrew during Mapu's lifetime. It was on the romances of Sue that he modelled himself, so far at least as plot was concerned. Novels like those of Sue may be regarded as an outcome of the great revolutionary movement of the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. They are a revolt against the conventionality of a sophisticated age, in which custom and obedience to social law have so obscured the mainsprings of human action that they seem to have become the ruling force. The romantic novelist brushes away all this over-growth

of civilization, and reveals the workings of the primal instincts and emotions of human nature. Love, hatred, the passion for revenge—these are for him the springs of all human conduct; these are the foundation on which he builds up his romance of plot and counterplot. So it is with Mapu's three novels. In the *אַהֲבַת צִיּוֹן*, *Love of Zion*, and the *אַשְׁמַת שֹׁמְרוֹן*, *Sin of Samaria*, the scene is laid in ancient Palestine; in the *עֵיט זָבוּעַ*, or *Hypocrite*, the action takes place chiefly in a modern Russian Ghetto. But the type of story is always the same—always the play of fierce passions, exaggerated sometimes to the point of grotesqueness, and producing a state of things startlingly unlike the placid and humdrum aspect that modern life is apt to wear. When this is said, the general characteristics of his novels are perhaps sufficiently indicated. But the novels individually are worth a little more detailed examination.

The *Love of Zion* was Mapu's earliest work. It was commenced in 1830, when he was twenty-two years old; but he worked at it for more than twenty years before publishing it, and it did not see the light till the year 1852. The fact that the writing of the book was spread over so many years is of less importance than might be expected: for Mapu's was not a mind that developed to any considerable extent after he reached manhood. At any rate, the book is fairly even in style throughout, and there is no breach in the continuity of the story.

The theme of the *Love of Zion* is the love-story of Amnon and Tamar, and its scene is laid in Palestine under the reign of king Ahaz. The novel begins, in the most approved style, with the birth of the hero and heroine, and carries them safely over the path of proverbial roughness to the wedding-day. They have been predestined for one another by their fond parents even before their birth; but if their happiness is thus decreed beforehand, so also are the troubles through which they must pass before they can attain it. For Amnon is born under a shadow. His

father, the wealthy and powerful Joram, has been the victim of a foul plot, instigated by his rival, and pretended friend, Mattan the judge. Like the Biblical Elkanah, Joram has two wives, Naamah and Haggith; like Elkanah also, he loves the one more than the other, and thus causes jealousy between them. Mattan, who loves Haggith, and burns to revenge himself on his successful rival, takes advantage of this fact. When Joram goes out to fight the Philistines, Mattan persuades the steward Achan (who also has his grievance) to set fire to Haggith's house, destroy her and her children, and give it out that the crime has been committed by Naamah. Achan is then to pretend that his own infant son is Ezrikom, the heir of Joram, whom he has rescued from the flames.

The plot is successfully carried out. Naamah is persuaded by Achan to run away, and of course the whole world believes her guilty. While she is living in concealment Amnon is born. Brought up as a shepherd, in ignorance of his birth and rank, he attracts attention by his noble bearing and his graces both of mind and of body. The turning-point comes when he captivates Tamar (who of course does not know the shepherd) by his singing, and saves her life by slaying a lion. This ensures him a welcome in her father's house, and Amnon and Tamar of course fall more and more violently in love with each other. But they have much to go through before their happiness can be realized. Tamar is destined (and her fate is confirmed time and again by heaven-sent dreams) for Joram's son; and here is Ezrikom, ugly of body and evil of heart—but still, so far as the world knows, a son of Joram. How shall the poor and unknown Amnon stand against him? How shall Tamar set her own will against that of her parents? Nay, how shall she even retain her faith in Amnon when his character is blackened by the insidious arts of his rival? But true love triumphs in spite of difficulties. When things are blackest, Mattan reveals the secret on his death-bed. Achan and the pseudo-Ezrikom

are exposed, Amnon comes into his rights; and for him and Tamar the inevitable result follows.

The story is charming in its naïve impossibility, but there is of course nothing of striking originality about it. We are all familiar from childhood with the hero under a cloud, and the peerless heroine who is faithful to him throughout. So far as plot and incident and stage-devices go, Mapu's stock-in-trade is almost wholly borrowed from his French models. The characters, too, are conventional, and show no sign of any real study of human nature. The canvas is filled with the deep black and the pure white of romance, not with the infinitely subtle gradations of the psychological colour-scheme of actual life. It is not here that we have to look for traces of the author's individuality. These, indeed, are hard enough to find in the book at all: nor is this altogether surprising. Mapu was by temperament the reverse of self-assertive, and he belonged to a race whose outstanding characteristic is a wonderful, almost fatal, faculty of imitation. Yet, as Mr. Brainin points out, the *Love of Zion*, if it does not bear the impress of a strong personality, is so far independent of its French models, that it is thoroughly Hebrew. This is apparent, of course, in the choice of ancient Palestine as the scene of the story: it is apparent in the ardent love for the ancestral home of the Jews which breathes in every page, and in the often-emphasized preference for the country with its simplicity and innocence as compared with the restless life of the towns; above all is it apparent in the strongly religious tone of the book, in the insistence on the necessity for a firm faith in providence. And we see Mapu's own almost feminine temperament reflected in the fondness with which he dwells on the passion of love in its most ethereal form, and the abhorrence with which he turns from the machinations of the evil-doer. These characteristics are sufficient to distinguish the *Love of Zion* very radically from the novels of a Sue or a Dumas, however great its debt to them.

But, when all is said, the book has one paramount claim to distinction, and that is its language. To infuse a Hebrew spirit into a story of this type was something; but to tell the story in pure Biblical Hebrew, with all its *naïveté* and simple directness, this was indeed a great achievement. Mapu was not of course the first writer who used Hebrew for general literary purposes. To say nothing of the rich and varied Hebrew literature of mediæval times, there had taken place in Germany, a generation or two before Mapu's time, a revival of interest in pure Hebrew (as distinct from the semi-Aramaic language of the later Talmudic writings) which had borne excellent fruits. But Mapu had the poetic spirit and the imaginative insight which the German Hebraists, for the most part, conspicuously lacked; and by virtue of this gift he was able to assimilate and appropriate the Biblical spirit as none of them could. For this reason, where they are but imitators, he is a creative genius. He reproduces not merely the form, but the innermost spirit of the Biblical Hebrew. He is, in the truest sense of the word, a poet, with the poet's power of imagining himself into a world far other than that in which he actually lives.

There could perhaps be no more effective contrast than that between Mapu's actual surroundings and the life that he depicts in the *Love of Zion*. The contrast is not merely that between town and country. There is all the vast difference between the open-air life of a free people, believing in itself, and ready to resist its enemies to the death, and the life of a down-trodden race, confined within Ghetto walls, for which restrictions and hardships are normal features of its existence. Yet Mapu's descriptions of Palestinian life and scenery have a warmth and wealth of colouring hardly to be surpassed by one writing of things with which he was familiar. No doubt there were trees and birds and sunshine in Russia; but for Mapu the lines did not fall in pleasant places, and, in any case, no amount of nature-study could have enabled him to

realize as he did the scenery of Palestine and the life of its shepherds and vine-growers. Nor again is it a matter of historical research. Mapu had nothing but the vague outline given in the Bible to help him in his task of reconstruction. Yet with this slender aid he succeeds, by sheer force of imagination, in making ancient Palestine live for us as no prosaic historian, with records never so ample, could make it live. The scene of the Bethlehem shepherds in the fourth chapter, and that of the grape-gathering in the fifth, are supreme instances of his wonderful imaginative power. With some diffidence I have attempted a translation of part of the first of these passages:—

“Bethlehem, the resting-place of Judah’s kings, lay to the south of Jerusalem, firm stablished on the top of a pleasant hill. Round about were many wells and springs of water clear as crystal, and sweet to the taste. In this fair spot grew juicy olives, and sweet grapes hanging in their ripe clusters. And as the hills were clothed in gladness, so were the valleys decked with myriad colours of bud and flower. There the young lambs skipped, and the herds of bullocks fed; it was a land flowing with milk and honey. . . . Here Amnon tended the flock of Abishai, the steward of Joram his father, and was accounted a shepherd’s son; and right well was he beloved of the shepherds for his beauty and his music: for he played the harp, and sang sweet songs to rejoice their hearts.

“Now the spring-tide gathered to Bethlehem all the noble sons of Zion, and her daughters fair and tender; and among them came Tamar to Abishai’s house, in the perfect bloom of her beauty, clad in purple and bright raiment. She went forth with Maachah her nurse to the pasturage of the shepherds, and passed by the place where Amnon rested his flock; and as the shepherds saw her, so were they amazed, and they said one to another: ‘See there the fairest of Zion’s daughters.’ But Amnon said to them: ‘Ill befits the shepherd to look on that which is

above him. Look we down at our flocks as they lie, and lift we not our eyes to behold the daughters of the highest in the land.' Yet did Amnon gaze after her from afar, and observed her goings. The sun poured forth his priceless light and glowing warmth over the pastures; the streams of water babbled on in their noisy torrents; the leaves rustled in the warm breeze that stirred the twigs, and there was heard the song of birds and the sound of the flocks, and the solemn echo from the mountains."

In the *Sin of Samaria* we have a story of the same type, but on a larger scale. The number of characters is greater, and the web of intrigue is more intricately woven. The historical setting of the story is the struggle between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the times of Ahaz and Hezekiah, resulting in the triumph of the righteous Judah, and the overthrow of her impious rival. As the title denotes, Samaria, the Israelite capital, is for Mapu, as it was for the prophet Isaiah, the home of all that is evil. He denounces the false gods and false priests of Bethel with a fervour that could not have been surpassed by the most inspired prophet of the true God in the actual period. We are compelled to admire the strength of imagination that enabled him to think himself back into that far-distant time, and to feel once more the hopes and fears of the combatants in a thrice-dead quarrel; but we can hardly be expected to take any vivid interest in this struggle of three thousand years ago, more especially when it is portrayed in so partisan and one-sided a spirit.

Setting aside the historical aspect, the book has no special merit, unless intricacy of plot be one. The reader grows tired of the numerous pairs of lovers (belonging to two generations) who have to be happily mated at the end; and the spectacle of Uzziel rejoicing in his two wives, with which the book closes, will scarcely appeal to minds habituated to the principle of monogamy. Again, the book is inferior to the *Love of Zion* in that the evil-doers bulk more largely in it; for Mapu was far more at home with

the virtuous lover than with the unscrupulous villain. Nor, I think, will the *Sin of Samaria* bear comparison with the earlier work on the ground of freshness and charm of style. There are, however, passages of fiery denunciation in which the spirit of Isaiah is caught as probably no other writer has caught it.

Mapu's last novel, the *Hypocrite* (עֵץ צָבִי, literally "coloured bird") takes us into a different world. We have no longer a historical novel, but a romance of the author's own time and country, in which the characters are, or purport to be, such men and women as he met every day. At the outset it must be said that Mapu was the last person in the world who might be expected to deal successfully with contemporary life. He was essentially a dreamer and a poet, wrapped up in his own phantasies, and given to seeing things through the coloured glasses of imagination. If we attempt to judge the *Hypocrite* by the canon of faithfulness to actual life, we shall be compelled to pronounce it a failure. The familiar types from which he drew his characters—the cunning matchmaker, the persecuted "Mascil," the bigoted Rabbi, the ignorant fanatic, the needy and unworldly scholar—are hopelessly exaggerated. If our knowledge of the surroundings in which Mapu lived were based wholly on this novel, we should still hesitate to believe that the Mascilim were such angels, and their opponents such despicable creatures, as he makes them. Some of his characters, again, are more purely products of his imagination. He can hardly have been familiar with the rich and influential Jew who has the ear of princes, or, again, with the extreme assimilationist of the type of Abner, who calls himself Émile, and wishes to deny all connexion with his people. Still less can his hero and heroine have existed outside his own fancy. They represent that combination of thorough general culture with intense Jewish feeling, which Mapu no doubt hoped to see realized, but which could scarcely co-exist with the actual features of Russian

Jewry in his time. The *Hypocrite*, in fact, falls between two stools. It is neither a picture from life, nor a pure romance, but a little of both. Further, as an attempt at realism it must be condemned on the ground of exaggeration; as an ideal picture it is open to the criticism that the author has not created a setting in which the realization of his ideal might be regarded as possible.

Nor can one give the same unstinted praise to the style of the *Hypocrite* as to that of the *Love of Zion*. Not that Mapu's hand has lost its cunning. His mastery of the simple Biblical Hebrew remains. But the language no longer fits the subject so perfectly. Transplanted from ancient Palestine to modern Russia, it loses its freshness, and appears glaringly and painfully artificial, more like a corpse than a living instrument of thought. We feel that the development which the Jewish people has undergone in three thousand years demands a commensurate development in language. Or, to put it in another way, we feel that we have left the Biblical spirit behind, and brought with us only the Biblical form. Phrases taken straight from the Scriptures, which were so appropriate and even inevitable in the *Love of Zion*, are now mere מליצות, "flowers of diction"—Biblical tags twisted often into strange meanings, without too much regard for grammar. It is true that the twistings are often superlatively clever. Take for instance the adaptation of the phrase קול ה' אלהים קול ה' אלהים בן לריוח היום "The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day¹," to express a sort of progressive revelation: "the spirit of the time" is the voice of God. But the total effect is that of a mosaic of Biblical quotations, not that of a living language.

Yet, in spite of these drawbacks, the *Hypocrite* does derive a certain interest, of a kind not shared by the historical novels, from the fact that it touches on the actual life of the writer's time. It does at least deal in some

¹ Gen. iii. 8. The word ריוח, here translated "cool," means either "wind" or "spirit."

sort of way with a problem that is perennial and perennially fascinating—the problem of the development of a nation's ideas. The struggle between the Mascilim and the ultra-orthodox, which is the pivot on which the story turns, has its counterpart in the history of every nation. It is the ever-living conflict between the two opposing tendencies in man's nature—between the conservative spirit which makes him cling affectionately to the well-worn road, and the progressive spirit whereby he is impelled to venture out upon untrodden paths. And for Jewish history at all events that particular phase of the spiritual conflict which began to be fought in Mapu's time has not yet lost its importance. For this reason we may read the *Hypocrite*, in spite of all its defects, with a feeling of concrete personal interest such as cannot be stirred by the struggle depicted in the *Sin of Samaria*.

The *Hypocrite* has thus a certain attraction for the student of the philosophy of history. But to treat it from this point of view is to be unjust to the author. Mapu had his ideals, but they were felt rather than thought out, and he was too much of a partisan to take a comprehensive view of the struggle in which he played a part. So the *Hypocrite* remains simply a romance, and not a very successful one at that. There is no need to criticize the author's ideal, either on the ground of its intrinsic worth, or on that of the possibility of its realization, because his aim was not to present an ideal to his readers, but to awaken an interest in the Hebrew language by using it to tell an interesting story. It matters little that his stories show no originality of conception or psychological insight. It matters still less that we find no coherent philosophy in the one novel in which we might be tempted to look for it. In order to obtain a true estimate of Mapu's importance, we must disregard these considerations, and regard him as what he set out to be—as an enthusiast for Hebrew, and a master of its use.

Judged from this point of view, he deserves nothing but

praise. His mastery of Hebrew was perfect. Whatever thought he wished to express he could put simply and clearly, without going (except in a few cases) beyond the limits of the Scriptural vocabulary. More than that, he never wrote Hebrew like one who thinks in a different language, and has to translate. The style of the *Hypocrite* is artificial indeed, but that is only because Mapu was so permeated with the Biblical spirit that he could not write naturally about his own time. Its artificiality is never that of a language unfamiliar to the writer.

With this perfection of style Mapu succeeded, as he deserved to succeed, in his aim of reviving interest in the Hebrew language. The wealth of the Hebrew literature produced in Russia during his lifetime, and afterwards, testifies to the completeness of his success—a success achieved by dint of perseverance in the face of the most formidable difficulties. Doomed to a perpetual struggle for existence, he was yet able to write stories as pleasant as his life was melancholy. He had to create his own public, to do the merely commercial as well as the literary part of the work, to distribute his books himself, often with little chance of obtaining their price. *סופר אני ולא סוחר* “I am an author, not a huckster,” he exclaims bitterly in one of his letters, chafing under the irksome necessity of doing the work of agents and publishers. Yet he never lost his imaginative power, nor his enthusiasm for the Hebrew language, and he was rewarded by seeing the seed which he had sown bearing good fruit in the generation that followed him. Nor was he denied the respect and admiration of his contemporaries. His approval was eagerly sought after by budding authors who attempted to imitate him, and who submitted their manuscripts to him for judgment. Modern Hebrew literature has indeed developed on lines far other than those laid down by him. As regards both style and subjects, it has advanced to the level of the times. But this very fact helps to throw into stronger relief the freshness and purity of Mapu’s

old-world novels, and rather enhances than detracts from their value. Certainly it can never be made a ground for neglecting him, or denying the value of his service in the cause of Hebrew as a living language.

LEON SIMON.